

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Version # _____

APP # 700241

1. Project Description

A. Statement of GO Activity

This grant application refers to ground operations for partial support for trend monitoring of bird populations in OHV recreation landscapes on BLM public lands in southeastern California with old-growth Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands (also known as "microphyll" woodlands).

Birds of the Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands are indicators of the habitat quality and rate of change in these ecosystems. Climate models forecast intense environmental changes for the Sonoran Desert; risks to Sonoran Desert wildlife and the capacity of the Sonoran Desert to store carbon for mitigating effects of climate change are major concerns of BLM biologists. As ecosystem management for wildlife and recreation intensifies in woodlands, data on bird populations will demonstrate the effectiveness of BLM management practices to conserve thorn woodlands. A large number of bird species nesting in these woodlands are Special Status Species: Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Elf Owl, and Arizona Bell's Vireo (State of California Endangered) plus Burrowing Owl, Long-eared Owl, Crissal Thrasher, Bendire's Thrasher, and Lucy's Warbler (BLM Sensitive Species/California Department of Fish and Game Species of Special Concern). These woodlands are key also as stopover sites, providing shelter and food for neotropical migrants as they travel long distances across the Sonoran Desert north toward the San Bernardino Mountains and the Sierra Nevada. Monitoring the Sonoran Desert thorn woodland habitat and its birds fulfills in part the obligations for sustainability in Habitat Management Plans for OHV project areas in the following BLM field offices with lands in California: El Centro, Lake Havasu, Needles, Palm Springs, and Yuma.

For 2009/2010, the Bureau of Land Management and its Partners, PRBO Conservation Science and Partners-In-Flight, are undertaking six activities:

1. Uniform baseline surveys at 400+ permanent count points across the Sonoran Desert, using the standardized BLM / Partners-In-Flight protocol for spring counts of breeding and migrant birds in major OHV recreation and riding sites in the Lower Colorado River corridor, the Salton Sea Trough, and eastern Riverside County, with reference sites and in non- or low-motorized areas for comparison and contrast [excluding the Imperial Sand Dunes, partially funded by BLM]
2. Spring and winter bird surveys of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Management Area OHV Riding Area and non-riding areas in the Algodones Dunes Wilderness [funded entirely by BLM]
3. Nest monitoring for raptor, woodpecker, and neotropical migrant bird species to document breeding and fledging success and types and amounts of OHV disturbance at sites with and without authorized OHV riding [partially funded by BLM]
4. Searches and characterizations of nest sites and their success for decision support to guide restoration of thorn woodland breeding habitats of BLM special status species, State of California listed endangered species, and CA Department of Fish and Game species of special concern [partially funded by BLM]

Surveys involve three-minute counts at fixed monitoring points twice during the breeding season and (for the Imperial Sand Dunes) twice during the winter. The goal is to develop an estimate of the density of key indicator bird species and special status bird species in this subtropical desert environment. Once nesting season begins, survey teams locate nests of rare species in woodland habitats and characterize the habitat conditions in which nesting and food foraging occur. Some of the Colorado River thorn woodland sites are only accessible by boat.

These tasks help woodland managers better understand the conditions in which special status bird species are most numerous and most successful in reproduction as the basis for directed management to enhance and restore Sonoran Desert thorn woodland habitat in areas where OHV recreation is important.

B. Relation of Proposed Project to OHV Recreation

As open space for residents of southern California becomes more valuable and distant from where people live, these once

remote woodlands are attracting more visitors interested in exploration, recreation, and solitude that BLM public lands offer. OHVs and SUVs provide the access by which visitors are able reach these woodlands, whatever their target recreation might be. To manage these woodlands for both OHV access and recreational riding in balance with woodland ecological integrity and conservation of biological diversity, especially rare birds, BLM biologists believe that investing in monitoring is the surest way to know how effective BLM habitat management is to protect rare species while sustaining access to woodlands for people. BLM acknowledges its special role in the conservation of the Sonoran Desert thorn woodland ecosystems in a time of climate change because the Bureau is the steward of more than 90% of this habitat type in California. Audubon California has designated this habitat in its entirety as an Important Bird Area for the State of California.

Sustainability of these woodlands is important to ecosystem stability of Sonoran Desert washes because their tree structure slows the speed of water and their root systems maintain wash and bank stability during flash flooding typical of the monsoon and winter rain regimes in Southeast California. Thorn woodlands are critically important for the quality of water flowing into the Colorado River and the Salton Sea during flash floods. Sustaining OHV access, travel, and recreation opportunity in these impressive woodlands is critical too because these areas offer attractive sites to picnic, camp, and seek shade. With loss or degradation of this habitat, we would all lose scenic beauty and the inviting shelter of these unusual woodlands. We do not have a long history of stewardship for these woodlands, and we need to be learning quickly how to sustain these woodlands with restoration and silvicultural tending that promote both woodland health and recreational enjoyment for visitors.

C. Size of the Project

The Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands extend 70 air miles in the lower Colorado River Valley from the US-Mexican border to Chemehuevi Wash in San Bernardino County. Away from the Colorado River, the woodlands appear on the bajada plain from the Chocolate Mountains downslope to the highest dune peaks on the east side of the Imperial Sand Dunes. This habitat courses on NW-SE axis from central Imperial County 38 miles from the international border. The third major but patchily distributed concentration of thorn woodlands occurs in Riverside County and runs 120 miles in a band of varying width from San Geronio Pass/Mission Creek on the west (NE of Palm Springs) eastward on both sides of the I-10 corridor to Blythe at the Colorado River.

D. Location and description of OHV opportunities

The region covered in this project consists of remote locations amid the rugged mountain terrain in eastern Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties, all counties with considerable OHV recreation resources on BLM public lands.

The array of resources in the Sonoran Desert thorn woodland region includes the most visited OHV recreation site in the world, the Imperial Sand Dunes in Imperial County which has multiple sections with open riding for OHVs as well as a ten-acre thorn forest (closed canopy) unique in California.

Along the Colorado River corridor in easternmost San Bernardino County is the Parker Strip, a center for multiple recreation pastimes where OHV recreation is a major recreation pastime in the broad spectrum of recreation encompassing boating, waterskiing, swimming, hiking, camping, hunting, and birding. Two OHV open areas, Copper Dunes and Crossroads on the California side of the lower Colorado River, are situated inside the Parker Strip. A fine designated route network exists for touring around the outstanding landscape of the Whipple Mountains and takes in the largest area of saguaros in California. The Strip also provides access to OHV opportunities immediately across the state line on the Arizona side of the Colorado River. Chemehuevi Wash, the northernmost location for Sonoran Desert thorn woodland in California, has been popular for motorcycle and 4x4 vehicle riding for decades.

BLM public lands in eastern Riverside County between Indio and Blythe are increasingly popular touring area for OHV folks on BLM designated routes. The BLM Palm Springs Field Office has established the Meccacopia Special Recreation Area (SRA) with a technically challenging route network that provide vehicular access via federally legislated "cherry stem" routes into wildernesses east of City of Indio and the town of Mecca, making wilderness more accessible for more people. Many OHV routes run along wilderness boundaries as well so that people can reach remote destinations for non-motorized recreation, backcountry hiking, and camping in wilderness. Route touring in the Meccacopia SRA through Sonoran Desert

thorn woodlands offers a visually rich and unexpectedly verdant setting and offers a different experience of driving solitude for people who might be too familiar with traffic congestion in coastal southern California.

2. Rerouting Requirements

Rerouting

- (a) Does your project involve rerouting of any roads and trails? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If response to question (a) is 'Yes', a Project timeline, conceptual drawings and site plans are required (See 'Attachments' tab at the top of the screen)

If response to question (a) is 'No', skip details related to rerouting

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Version # _____

APP # 700241

1. **Project Timeline (Required if project includes necessary rerouting)**
2. **Conceptual Drawings and Site Plans (Required if project includes necessary rerouting)**
3. **Project-Specific Maps**
Attachments: [Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands project map](#)
4. **Optional Project-Specific Application Documents**
Attachments: [Photos of Rare Bird, Woodlands, and OHV Touring Trails](#)

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
 Agency: BLM - California Desert District
 Application: Ecology - CDD Sonoran Desert Thorn Woodland Bird Monitoring

6/2/2009

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:		Version # _____	APP # _____
APPLICANT NAME :	BLM - California Desert District		
PROJECT TITLE :	Ecology - CDD Sonoran Desert Thorn Woodland Bird Monitoring	PROJECT NUMBER (Division use only) :	
PROJECT TYPE :	<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition <input type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Education & Safety <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ground Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration		
PROJECT DESCRIPTION :	<p>This grant application refers to ground operations for partial support for trend monitoring of bird populations in OHV recreation landscapes on BLM public lands in southeastern California with old-growth Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands (also known as "microphyll" woodlands).</p> <p>Birds of the Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands are indicators of the habitat quality and rate of change in these ecosystems. Climate models forecast intense environmental changes for the Sonoran Desert; risks to Sonoran Desert wildlife and the capacity of the Sonoran Desert to store carbon for mitigating effects of climate change are major concerns of BLM biologists. As ecosystem management for wildlife and recreation intensifies in woodlands, data on bird populations will demonstrate the effectiveness of BLM management practices to conserve thorn woodlands. A large number of bird species nesting in these woodlands are Special Status Species: Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Elf Owl, and Arizona Bell's Vireo (State of California Endangered) plus Burrowing Owl, Long-eared Owl, Crissal Thrasher, Bendire's Thrasher, and Lucy's Warbler (BLM Sensitive Species/California Department of Fish and Game Species of Special Concern). These woodlands are key also as stopover sites, providing shelter and food for neotropical migrants as they travel long distances across the Sonoran Desert north toward the San Bernardino Mountains and the Sierra Nevada. Monitoring the Sonoran Desert thorn woodland habitat and its birds fulfills in part the obligations for sustainability in Habitat Management Plans for OHV project areas in the following BLM field offices with lands in California: El Centro, Lake Havasu, Needles, Palm Springs, and Yuma.</p> <p>For 2009/2010, the Bureau of Land Management and its Partners, PRBO Conservation Science and Partners-In-Flight, are undertaking six activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uniform baseline surveys at 400+ permanent count points across the Sonoran Desert, using the standardized BLM / Partners-In-Flight protocol for spring counts of breeding and migrant birds in major OHV recreation and riding sites in the Lower Colorado River corridor, the Salton Sea Trough, and eastern Riverside County, with reference sites and in non- or low-motorized areas for comparison and contrast [excluding the Imperial Sand Dunes, partially funded by BLM] 2. Spring and winter bird surveys of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Management Area OHV Riding Area and non-riding areas in the Algodones Dunes Wilderness [funded entirely by BLM] 3. Nest monitoring for raptor, woodpecker, and neotropical migrant bird species to document breeding and fledging success and types and amounts of OHV disturbance at sites with and without authorized OHV riding [partially funded by BLM] 4. Searches and characterizations of nest sites and their success for decision support to guide restoration of thorn woodland breeding habitats of BLM special status species, State of California listed endangered species, and CA Department of Fish and Game species of special concern [partially funded by BLM] <p>Surveys involve three-minute counts at fixed monitoring points twice during the breeding season and (for the Imperial Sand Dunes) twice during the winter. The goal is to develop an estimate of the density of key indicator bird species and special status bird species in this subtropical desert environment. Once nesting season begins, survey teams locate nests of rare species in woodland habitats and characterize the habitat conditions in which nesting and food foraging occur. Some of the Colorado River thorn woodland sites are only accessible by boat.</p>		

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
Agency: BLM - California Desert District
Application: Ecology - CDD Sonoran Desert Thorn Woodland Bird Monitoring

6/2/2009

		These tasks help woodland managers better understand the conditions in which special status bird species are most numerous and most successful in reproduction as the basis for directed management to enhance and restore Sonoran Desert thorn woodland habitat in areas where OHV recreation is important.					
	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
DIRECT EXPENSES							
Program Expenses							
1	Staff						
	Other-Wildlife Biologist - Palm Springs	120.000	51.410	HRS	0.00	6,169.00	6,169.00
	Other-Wildlife Biologist - Needles FO	80.000	41.020	HRS	0.00	3,282.00	3,282.00
	Other-Colorado River Boat Volunteers	80.000	18.040	HRS	0.00	1,443.00	1,443.00
	Other-CASO OHV Program Mgr	40.000	75.080	HRS	0.00	3,003.00	3,003.00
	Total for Staff				0.00	13,897.00	13,897.00
2	Contracts						
	Other-Contract: Imperial Sand Dunes Wood	1.000	10000.000	EA	0.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
	Other-Contract: Other Woodlands	1.000	66000.000		66,000.00	0.00	66,000.00
	Total for Contracts				66,000.00	10,000.00	76,000.00
3	Materials / Supplies						
4	Equipment Use Expenses						
5	Equipment Purchases						
6	Others						
7	Administrative Costs						
	Administrative Costs-Procurement analyst	30.000	51.040	HRS	0.00	1,531.00	1,531.00
Total Program Expenses					66,000.00	25,428.00	91,428.00
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES					66,000.00	25,428.00	91,428.00

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
Agency: BLM - California Desert District
Application: Ecology - CDD Sonoran Desert Thorn Woodland Bird Monitoring

6/2/2009

	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
TOTAL EXPENDITURES					66,000.00	25,428.00	91,428.00

Project Cost Summary for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
Agency: BLM - California Desert District
Application: Ecology - CDD Sonoran Desert Thorn Woodland Bird Monitoring

6/2/2009

	Line Item	Grant Request	Match	Total	Narrative
DIRECT EXPENSES					
Program Expenses					
1	Staff	0.00	13,897.00	13,897.00	
2	Contracts	66,000.00	10,000.00	76,000.00	
3	Materials / Supplies	0.00	0.00	0.00	
4	Equipment Use Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	
5	Equipment Purchases	0.00	0.00	0.00	
6	Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	
7	Administrative Costs	0.00	1,531.00	1,531.00	
Total Program Expenses		66,000.00	25,428.00	91,428.00	
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES		66,000.00	25,428.00	91,428.00	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		66,000.00	25,428.00	91,428.00	

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Version # _____

APP # 700241

ITEM 1 and ITEM 2

ITEM 1

- a. ITEM 1 - Has a CEQA Notice of Determination (NOD) been filed for the Project? ☐ Yes ☒ No
(Please select Yes or No)

ITEM 2

- b. ITEM 2 - Are the proposed activities a "Project" under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378? ☐ Yes ☒ No
(Please select Yes or No)
- c. The Application is requesting funds solely for personnel and support to enforce OHV laws and ensure public safety. These activities would not cause any physical impacts on the environment and are thus not a "Project" under CEQA. (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No
- d. Other. Explain why proposed activities would not cause any physical impacts on the environment and are thus not a "Project" under CEQA. DO NOT complete ITEMS 3 – 9
All activities associated with this project have been previously analyzed and provided for in previous grants as NEPA and CEQA adequate.

ITEM 3 - Impact of this Project on Wetlands

ITEM 4 - Cumulative Impacts of this Project

ITEM 5 - Soil Impacts

ITEM 6 - Damage to Scenic Resources

ITEM 7 - Hazardous Materials

Is the proposed Project Area located on a site included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code (hazardous materials)? (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No

If YES, describe the location of the hazard relative to the Project site, the level of hazard and the measures to be taken to minimize or avoid the hazards.

ITEM 8 - Potential for Adverse Impacts to Historical or Cultural Resources

Would the proposed Project have potential for any substantial adverse impacts to historical or cultural resources? (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No

If YES, describe the potential impacts and for any substantially adverse changes in the significance of historical or cultural resources and measures to be taken to minimize or avoid the impacts.

ITEM 9 - Indirect Significant Impacts

CEQA/NEPA Attachment

Attachments:

[Sonaran Desert thorn woodland birds NEPA](#)

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Version # _____

APP # 700241

1. Project Cost Estimate - Q 1. (Auto populates from Cost Estimate)

1. As calculated on the Project Cost Estimate, the percentage of the cost of the Project covered by the Applicant is 3

(Check the one most appropriate) (Please select one from list)

- ☐ 76% or more (10 points)
☐ 51% - 75% (5 points)
☒ 26% - 50% (3 points)
☐ 25% (Match minimum) (No points)

2. Failure to Complete - Q 2.

2. Failure to complete the Project would result in: 2

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 8 points (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Loss of OHV Opportunity (6 points)
☐ Negative impact to cultural sites (2 points)
☒ Damage to special-status species or other sensitive habitat (2 points)
☐ Potential trespass (2 points)
☐ Additional damage to Facilities (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

This ground operational monitoring assists BLM regionally to meet requirements for HMPs for the Sonoran Desert Thorn Woodland where a high number of endangered bird species are found. The Sonoran Desert thorn woodland is in its entirety an Important Bird Area in California.

3. Sustain OHV Opportunity - Q 3.

3. The Project would sustain OHV Opportunity by 3

(Check all that apply) (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Maintaining trail or road tread (5 points)
☐ Installing or repairing erosion control features (3 points)
☒ Providing traffic control and/or educational signage (3 points)
☐ Maintaining multi use (ATV, Dirt Bikes, 4x4, etc) (1 point)
☐ Providing varied levels of riding difficulty (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

Information gathered from this project will help the BLM better inform OHV riding enthusiast at various kiosk locations.

4. Public Input - Q 4.

4. The Project was developed with public input employing the following 2

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 2 points (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Meeting(s) with the general public to discuss Project (1 point)
☒ Conference call(s) with interested parties (1 point)
☒ Meeting(s) with stakeholders (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

Sonoran Thorn Woodland Management is a major wildlife and habitat issue for the five BLM field offices on the California side of the lower Colorado River. OHV program leaders, archaeologists, and wildlife biologists meet once a month by telephone to plan OHV recreation for regional consistency, including protection for rare woodland birds.

Stakeholders from research organizations, land management agencies, and universities have met to discuss the impacts to woodland wildlife from climate change and human disturbance (especially vehicular).

5. Utilization of Partnerships - Q 5.

5. The Project will utilize partnerships to successfully accomplish the Project. The number of partner organizations that will participate in the Project are 4

(Check the one most appropriate) (Please select one from list)

- ☒ 4 or more (4 points) ☐ 2 to 3 (2 points)
☐ 1 (1 point) ☐ None (No points)

List partner organization(s):

- PRBO Conservation Science
- Sonoran Joint Venture for Bird Conservation
- US Fish and Wildlife Service Lower Colorado Wildlife Refuges
- Pro Natura (Mexican environmental organization concern with human disturbance to Sonoran Desert woodlands in Mexico)
- 5 BLM field offices in the California Desert District
- California Audubon

6. Impact to Natural and Cultural Resources - Q 6.

6. The Project will avoid and/or minimize impact to natural and cultural resources by 1

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 7 points (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Maintaining physical barriers to control OHV use (1 point)
☐ Protecting water quality (1 point)
☐ Providing bridges instead of wet crossings where appropriate (1 point)
☒ Protecting special-status species (1 point)
☐ Re-routing trails to divert away from riparian/wetlands areas (1 point)
☐ Providing sanitary facilities (1 point)
☐ Protecting cultural site(s) (1 point)
☐ Site design precludes the need for the above measures (7 points)

Explain each statement that was checked

This ground operations monitoring program detects over time whether multiple-use management of the Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands, a favored recreation habitat of OHV riders as well as rare bird species, is adequate to maintaining bird species populations and OHV riding opportunity.

7. Recycled Materials - Q 7.

7. The Project incorporates recycled materials by utilizing 1

(Check all that apply) (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Barrier materials which include recycled content or materials obtained onsite (1 point)
☐ Signs, sign posts or education kiosks which use products with recycled content (1 point)
☐ Erosion control features which use materials with recycled content (1 point)
☐ Paper used for trail maps which includes recycled content (1 point)
☒ Other products with recycled content (Specify) (1 point) [field collection data sheets]

8. Sustainable Technologies - Q 8.

8. The Project makes substantial use of sustainable technologies such as 0

- Alternative fuel vehicles and equipment
- Renewable energy sources (e.g., solar, wind)
- Low volatile organic compound emission materials (e.g., paint, sealants, carpet)
- Low flow plumbing fixtures
- Water efficient landscaping

(Check the one most appropriate) (Please select one from list)

☒ No (No points)

☐ Yes (4 points)

Explain 'Yes' response

9. Motorized Access - Q 9.

9. The Project improves and/or maintains facilities that provide motorized access to the following non-motorized recreation opportunities 6

(Check all that apply) Scoring: 2 points each, up to a maximum of 6 points (Please select applicable values)

☒ Camping

☒ Birding

☒ Hiking

☐ Equestrian trails

☐ Fishing

☐ Rock Climbing

☐ Other (Specify)